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The *Fresno* **VOTER**



Monday, March 20
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m.—League Office

Monday, April 17
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m.—League Office

Saturday, April 29
76th Annual Meeting
Details to be announced

Members and their guests*
are invited to all
League meetings and events



* Typical guest

New format for Program Planning a success

A trio of significant issues was selected for priority focus at the League’s annual Program Planning meeting last month. Led by Director Pat Campbell, a record number of nearly 25 percent of our members selected Civic Engagement, Education and Housing as their “top three.”

The meeting incorporated new procedures. While in previous years each director spoke about the past year’s activities and achievements, this year the focus was on planning for the future. Speaking about **Civic Engagement** was **Director Marianne Kast**, who emphasized getting the community involved in civic issues in addition to voter registration. The League is already part of the county’s Civic Partnership which facilitates the civic engagement of students.

Director Kay Bertken spoke about the many **Education** areas in which we continue to be involved. School board governance, equal education opportunity especially for struggling populations, career technical education and an emphasis on the zero-to-two year old population are just some of the many issues that need to be addressed.

Member Patience Milrod looked forward to the implementation of the new rental **housing** inspection program recently adopted by the city council. Monitoring this program, working toward an increase of affordable, inclusionary housing, and the connection between de facto housing segregation and equal opportunity in education, are areas for concern and study.

Other directors whose areas were not chosen for priority focus, but who will still continue in the important work in which they are immersed are **Diane Merrill, water resources; Mary Savala, land use; Stephenie Frederick, transportation.** Member **Radley Reep** continues to follow the implementation of Fresno’s new General Plan.

State priorities were also selected by members, led by Liz Shields and Lisa Bryant. In preference order were **Water, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)/ and Housing.** Our selections will be sent to LWVC and collated with others from across the state. Members also recommended that the state league study process needs to be streamlined; that statements of principle be given more weight than specific details in position statements; and that there should be a distinction between issues that previous studies did not cover and issues that were studied but on which no consensus was reached. Members and guests who volunteered to help the LWVC on priority issues will have their names forwarded to the Sacramento office.

President's Message



Our Program Planning meeting on February 4 was well attended by members who were discouraged by the current state of affairs that exists throughout our country. Many attendees expressed particular concern for poor people who depend upon government to provide for safe and affordable housing near clean parks, good quality schools and quality health care. There was also concern for immigrants with or without legal status, many who have been in the country for years, who just want a better life for themselves and their families.

What an amazing group of people who, after feeling discouraged and disheartened, decided it is now time to get to work and figure out what we can do to help make things better. We chose three local priorities: Civic Engagement, Education and Housing. Many in the group signed up to help work on these priorities, and we hope that the very positive energy that all exhibited can make a real difference in the lives of those we have committed ourselves to help.

If there are any other League members who did not attend the meeting but who would like to be involved, there are many ways you can help. You could: join a committee addressing a particular issue; write advocacy letters to government representatives; help with a Lunch & Learn activity, do phone reminders; attend local government meetings and any number of other activities. If you are interested to help us achieve our priority goals, please call 439-9008 or email nylajz@comcast.net. Any effort, large or small, can make a difference in the lives of the underserved in our society.

Nyla

The VOTER is a monthly publication of the League of Women Voters of Fresno

Mailing Address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710

Volume 76, No. 3 Editor: Francine Farber

Member News

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, April 29

**76th Annual
Meeting & Luncheon**

Lipton Award

Speaker

Election of Officers

Details Soon!

A League donation is a great birthday or holiday gift or as a memorial. Please make checks out to

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The League is now a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization so your dues payments and donations are tax deductible and gratefully accepted.



Thank You!

Three generations march for Women's Rights

Mary Savala



San Luis Obispo

I marched in San Luis Obispo with my two daughters. The march was very well organized, gathering in a city park at 9:30 a.m. There were 7,800 registrants on Saturday morning, but as we had not registered we suspected there were many more in attendance. Lots and lots of witty, home made signs. LWV SLO marched with a banner.

Morning began with short speeches, music, the poet laureate of San Luis Obispo read a poem, and the police chief of SLO (a woman!) reminded us of respect for each other and our environment. She said that is the same speech she gave 40 new graduates of the police academy.

The streets were closed in downtown; employees of the businesses on route came out and waved and cheered. Half way around, it rained hard, but there appeared to be no dropouts. All ages, many men, a very diverse crowd except for few African Americans which may be reflective of the population in SLO County.

Andrea Farber De Zubiria



Washington, D.C.

My son, his girlfriend and I walked a mile from their apartment to the kickoff rally for the DC Women's March. By the time we arrived, there were so many people by the stage that we could barely see the giant screens or hear the speakers. We milled through the crowd, marveling over all the pink hats and reading witty slogans

Periodically, an excited cheer would start near the stage and work its way through the crowd toward and over us like a giant wave of sound and energy. After awhile, we started to march. With a half million people in the streets, it was more like a slow shuffle. At first, the people around us were quiet. Suddenly a little girl of about 9 or 10 called out "*What do we want?*" and someone I couldn't see answered "*Women's Rights!*". "*When do we want them?*" the girl yelled. "*NOW!*" we all roared back. I know it's a cliché, but that feisty girl DID give me hope and I DID have to wipe away some tears.

Emma Renee De Zubiria



San Francisco

I went to the march because I need to be a voice in a generation that is being disregarded as as lazy and distant; or perhaps it was because at some point venting angst online has to start feeling like screaming into a bottomless void.

I parked my Prius in Oakland and set off for the BART. My friend and I walked leisurely, taking our time as we appreciated the scenery, but then slowly people donning pink hats began to trickle past us. Walking together quickly became difficult as larger and larger masses of people made their way past.

We found a break in the crowd and there before us was the Oakland march. We ran to join the crowd and together hundreds of us boarded and were carried to the march of San Francisco, where Joan Baez led us into action. And peacefully, some shoulder to shoulder and hand in hand with the officers, we marched into the history books.



As a stranger in a strange land—a white Californian doing an internal medicine internship at the mostly black District of Columbia General Hospital in 1972—I was introduced to the international nature of American medicine. My first supervising resident was a brilliant and imperious woman from New Delhi. At twenty-two (two years younger than I), she was a prodigy from accelerated medical education in India. Another memorable resident was an affable, experienced Greek physician in his mid-thirties, reduplicating some of his earlier training as required for licensing of immigrant physicians. My go-to specialist was an Iranian cardiologist who was beloved by all the resident staff because of his enthusiastic, skilled teaching of the physical exam of the heart. Our head radiologist, a native of China, was a leading innovator in catheter-based vascular imaging. My chief mentor in what was to become my specialty—rheumatology—was an Irish national. And so on.

It was an established fact then that big city public hospitals—even those with longstanding medical school affiliations—could not fill their residency positions without recruiting foreign medical graduates. The growing output of America’s medical schools was inadequate to meet unanticipated growth in demand for medical services. **Foreign physicians were not doing residencies here and returning home. They were staying to provide needed services. Most were becoming US citizens.**

At the medical school, residency, and fellowship levels, the American medical training system, since the Medicare and Medicaid programs of the mid-60’s, has failed to provide adequate physician manpower. U.S. funding of medical education is, sadly, terribly uncoordinated. But equally importantly, the projection of health manpower needs has been afflicted with optimistic views of the impact of computerization and improved health care organization. Moreover, it takes nearly twenty years to realize increased manpower from medical school expansions, which are slow and expensive, just like medical education and training. Currently the American Association of Medical Colleges is projecting a deficit of about 50,000 doctors by 2025, absent additional expansion of medical training pathways.

This is a 6% deficit in a country with one of the lowest doctor-to-patient ratios in the industrialized world.

So the U.S. is lucky that we can steal high-quality medical graduates from countries that would love to keep them. In the 40 years I have taught medicine at the residency programs of UCSF-Fresno, I have seen waves of immigration supplying our residency staff—continuously and dominantly from South Asia, but also from the Arabic-speaking countries, Western Africa, Iran after the fall of the Shah, Eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War, and later Russia. **These immigrants have surmounted imposing obstacles of language, culture and extremely high expectations of written test performance to qualify for residency positions. Scientific studies have shown that their performance in residencies is equivalent to their US-educated counterparts.**

Twenty-five percent of the members of the Fresno-Madera Medical Society are foreign medical graduates (FMG’s). This probably underestimates their contribution to the Central Valley’s health care portfolio, since more FMG’s practice in rural and underserved areas and are less likely to join the medical society. Further long-term restrictions on immigration pose a genuine threat to the integrity of our local and national health care services. But even short-term actions like the Trump immigration ban have hazardous consequences. According to Dr. Darrell G. Kirch, president of the American Association of Medical Colleges, “with Match Day approaching on March 17, an estimated 1,000 foreign medical graduates from the seven countries named in the executive order have already applied for residency programs and fellowships in the United States.” (*Match Day is a computerized process matching medical school graduates with potential residency placements.*) **These programs are now going through the process of selecting qualified applicants, and the executive order has created confusion around whether these learners will be able to come to this country for training and the possible continuation of their medical careers.”**

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



The Fresno County Behavioral Health Board received the long awaited Final Report on the Fresno County Housing Needs Assessment from the research firm of Harder+Co. After extensive interviews with clients, behavioral health service providers, housing providers, and community stakeholders, these are the recommendations:

- ◆ **Create a coordinated housing identification and referral system for people with behavioral health disorders**
- ◆ **Increase emergency housing access and capacity**
- ◆ **Work with existing operators to address quality and capacity issues**
- ◆ **Increase access to affordable housing at all levels of care, and**
- ◆ **Expand the stock of permanent housing available to Department of Behavioral Health clients.**

None of these recommendations was unexpected, but now there are data to back up the findings. The Board hopes that the Department will move forward with these recommendations in a timely manner.

Prior to the February meeting, Board members visited the First Street Center, which serves the population that has been released from prison for probation supervision and services in the community. They are non-violent, non-serious, non-sex offenders. Each year approximately 450 clients with substance use disorders and mild to moderate mental health diagnoses are served at Turning Point of Central California, an outpatient clinic. Those individuals with serious mental illnesses are referred to the accompanying Full Service Partnership with extensive wraparound services available for up to 105 clients. The Outcomes Report presented to the Board shows that for individuals served by First Street Center there has been a reduction in incarcerations, homelessness, and psychiatric and medical hospitalizations.

Director Dawan Utecht provided the Action Plan for Suicide Prevention that includes development of a countywide Suicide Prevention Committee. The next planning meeting is March 3 at 10:00 a.m. at the Sierra Building, 1925 E. Dakota Avenue. League members are invited to attend.

Housing

by Patience Milrod



Mayor Lee Brand has kept the promise he made in December, while still a Council member, to bring forward a comprehensive Rental Housing Improvement Act (RHIA).

- ◆ The Fresno City Council has adopted his groundbreaking ordinance, the result of years of research, community pressure, and citizen input, and incorporating best practice models from cities across the state and country. The RHIA makes three major changes to the way the city enforces safe housing laws:
- ◆ For the first time, the city will have a registry of all rental properties (although some properties, such as newly built units, will be exempt from inspection).
- ◆ For the first time, the city will conduct a baseline inspection of every non-exempt rental property—identifying the truly “worst of the worst” landlords, and focusing enforcement resources on them.
- ◆ For the first time, the city commits to a *proactive* systematic inspection program: conducting only random checks on identified good landlords, who will be self-certifying their properties’ condition, but focusing intense inspection and enforcement efforts on landlords whose properties fail the baseline inspection process.

The ordinance is an essential step toward bringing Fresno’s housing stock up to California health and safety standards, while protecting landlords from fines and fees when the problems are tenant-caused.

However, while Mayor Brand’s RHIA represents an historic milestone for the entire city, it is at the moment still only a policy. The next major challenge will be dealing with leadership and capacity challenges in the city department tasked with executing the ordinance. Mayor Brand promises major changes there, and he’s invited ongoing input from well-organized and persistent advocates. If the city does implement the ordinance with discipline, urgency, transparency—and continued leadership directly from the Mayor—the RHIA will make a life-changing difference for tens of thousands of Fresno families.

Education

by Kay Bertken



Education leadership changes locally and nationally are the big news of the month. Nationally, Betsy DeVos has been sworn in as Secretary of Education. Her primary involvement in education prior to taking this position was as a staunch advocate and supporter of school choice--the charter school movement and private schools. For those who opposed her nomination, that seemed an inappropriate background for a position charged with attention to the public schools of the country. Without specifically reflecting on her qualifications, it useful to note that the two Secretaries of Education under President Obama were also advocates for the charter school movement though not for the private school voucher and religious education interests of DeVos.

Charter school growth

2016 marked the 25th anniversary of the first state law authorizing charter schools, and now there are more than 6,700 in the country. The federal government has been a benefactor to this movement, providing \$3.3 billion in support over the years. Arne Duncan, President Obama's longest serving Secretary of Education, was probably best known for steering state education policy by providing relief from No Child Left Behind provisions. He also provided for federal dollars through Race to the Top funds to states that adopted the Common Core, implemented more rigorous testing and teacher evaluations and expanded charter school availability. Dr. John King succeeded Duncan. His background-- before his work with the New York Board of Regents, the Obama White House, and the Department of Education--was work for and with charter schools.

Just days before Duncan resigned, he initiated a \$249 million grant for charter schools, in spite of internal audits suggesting that the agency was lax in its oversight of charters .

Charters need oversight

While many charter schools are successful and lead some to believe that they are an answer to inequality in our schools, independent evaluations of their results have been very mixed. More important than that, from a continuing policy perspective, is that in spite of major financial investments, there has been little or no transparency or accountability demanded by Congress or the Department of Education for the use of those funds. If charters and more public support for private schools are among DeVos' priorities, it will be important to look for a strong commitment to oversight as well as attention to the effects on public schools.

Interim superintendent for FUSD

In Fresno Unified, as in the nation, changes are dramatic. Superintendent Hanson is gone and an interim has been appointed by the Board, Bob Nelson. Nelson was Superintendent Hanson's Chief of Staff for the last year of his tenure. He is a former superintendent himself and has been serving as Hanson's temporary replacement for the weeks since Hanson was abruptly dismissed. He and the board will be working to facilitate the search and hiring of a new superintendent, hopefully by July , according to Board President Ashjian.

It will be important to hold Board President Ashjian and the rest of the trustees to their stated commitment to a public selection process, transparent and with input from all stakeholders. It is clear that the new board leadership is asserting a more activist role in the management of the district. It is an open question whether qualified superintendent candidates will be attracted to this district when lines of authority and responsibility are uncertain.

Civic Engagement

by Marianne Kast

Water News by Diane Merrill

At this month's Program Planning session, LWVF members chose Civic Engagement as one of three priorities for this coming year. In what ways can the League be most effective supporting this priority? How can we best share our knowledge of the processes of democracy with others who are newer to advocacy, and who could use our guidance to get what their community needs?

I'm hoping that League members who have ideas about what we could be doing, will contact us with their suggestions. In the meanwhile, registering voters and protecting the sanctity of the voting process is our everyday task.

This month the City of Clovis will elect three new City Council members. Are you available to open vote-by-mail ballots at the Elections Warehouse on Wednesday afternoon, March 8, from 1-4 p.m.? Let me know:

fourkasts@gmail.com or

559-270-793

LWVC is following several pieces of water legislation recently introduced in the two-year 2017- 2018 California legislative session. Over the course of the legislative session, LWVC may decide to take no action, or to adopt a position of support or opposition to proposed legislation.

Senate Constitutional Amendment 4 (SCA-4)

From the legislative summary: "This measure would declare the intent of the Legislature to amend the California Constitution to provide a program that would ensure that affordable water is available to all Californians and to ensure that water conservation is given a permanent role in California's future."

Note: A Senate Constitutional Amendment is a resolution changing the language of the State Constitution, adopted by a two-thirds vote of the Legislature



or presented by initiative. It requires an affirmative vote of the majority of the electorate to become effective.

Assembly Bill 68 (AB 68) would require a new school facility built on or after January 1, 2018, and located within 2 miles of an operating farm, to obtain its water supply from a public water system.

Our league has been an active member of LWVC's Water Committee. This month Diane Merrill and Mary Savala will be traveling to Sacramento to meet with committee members from around the state. Topics of interest to leagues in the San Joaquin Valley include groundwater issues and the importance of water in maintaining the diversity and viability of agriculture.



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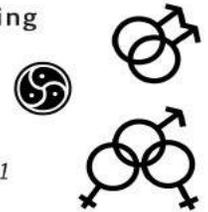
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DIVERSITY POLICY: There shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the LWVF on the basis of race, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or socio-economic level.

What do you get when you join the League? All for one fee, you become a member of the Fresno, California and national Leagues and receive their newsletters. You may participate in League studies of issues; receive leadership training; hone your public speaking skills; become knowledgeable about local and state issues; learn more about government, natural resources and social policies as your time and interests dictate. You will also meet some interesting and friendly women and men who represent diverse backgrounds but find common ground in keeping abreast of current issues.

Yearly Dues Individual - \$70 ~ Family - \$100 (2 members, same address) ~ Student - \$30

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